

VZCZCXRO2307
PP RUEHBI
DE RUEHLM #1147/01 3510403
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 170403Z DEC 09 ZFR
FM AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0995
INFO RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA 2186
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD 9210
RUEHKT/AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU 7460
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5309
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 3613
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 5235
RUEHSM/AMEMBASSY STOCKHOLM 0770
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 4357
RUEHCG/AMCONSUL CHENNAI 9770
RUEHBI/AMCONSUL MUMBAI 7061
RUEHON/AMCONSUL TORONTO 0091
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3925
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEHAAA/NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL WASHINGTON DC
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 COLOMBO 001147

///CANCEL DUPLICATE OF COLOMBO 1146///

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INSB

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PREF PHUM](#) [PGOV PREL CE](#)

SUBJECT: A/S Blake Views IDP Freedom of Movement at Menik Farm

COLOMBO 00001147 001.3 OF 003

///ZFR ZFR ZFR ZFR ZFR ZFR ZFR ///

COLOMBO 00001147 002 OF 003

far more manageable 20,000 persons. The overall number of IDPs in Menik Farms had dropped from a peak total of more than 280,000 to 114,000, which according to an earlier study by UNICEF is low enough to allow IDPs to relocate within the camp should monsoonal rains submerge their shelters. IDPs were upbeat with the expectation that the camp would be emptied by January 31, 2010, the revised end of the 180-day period in which the GSL had earlier committed to having all IDPs from the Wanni back home. The Government Agent had no answer when asked what would happen tby helicopter to the adjacent district of Mannar and traveled by road along a stretch between the Murunkan and Adampan divisions, where the GSL's military operations to capture the LTTE-controlled Wanni commenced in late 2007 and early 2008. He spoke with a GSL civil engineer at Giants Tank, a reservoir under rehabilitation by the World Bank that would supply water to an estimated 30,000 families once return to adjacent villages in the "rice bowl" of the North was complete. In front of a shop in Adampan, farmers said they had arrived too late to plant rice paddy during the current monsoon, which should continue through February, but were receiving from the World Food Program (WFP) monthly rations, which should continue for at least six months. At a school in Kattankulam, 10th-grade students -- many of whom had been displaced 16 times in the last three years -- had resumed their studies. Asked what they need most, they requested bicycles to get to school and more books for the school library. Soon their village was expected to be connected to the national power supply grid, at which point computers would also be needed.

DEMINEING

16. (SBU) Although no mine-related injuries had been reported among the IDP returnee population or demining teams operating in the Wanni, the level of contamination remained high, a member of the Sri

Lanka military's humanitarian demining unit told the A/S during a briefing at a site in Pallakuli, Mannar. To expedite returns, the military unit and international NGO demining teams were focusing on residential areas, public spaces and utilities, farmland and coastline providing fishing access as opposed to other contaminated areas with less productive use. Demining of priority areas in the Musali and Manthai West divisions of Mannar District had accommodated the earliest returnees; Manthai East would be next. Mechanized equipment and trained dogs -- some provided by the U.S. State Department in 2002 -- had dramatically improved the military demining unit's efficiency, the representative said. International NGO demining teams were working more slowly, the demining unit representative said, due to lack of resources, equipment and trained staff, noting that for most NGO demining staff, recruited from the local population, "even the word 'mine' itself is scary."

COMMENT

17. (SBU) Although the GSL-facilitated visits to the Menik Farms camp complex and returnee communities in Mannar did not appear to be overly scripted, government officials did in fact remain within earshot of United Nations and international non-governmental organizations, include the degree to which genuine freedom of movement exists in formerly closed camps -- the absence of an agreed-upon definition makes it difficult to judge - and the inherent danger of IDP return to areas that have not been issued low-risk certification for mines, a particular problem in parts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu. Other issues of concern include heavy military presence in some returnee areas, separation of family members prior to and sometimes after

COLOMBO 00001147 003.2 OF 003

return, delays in distribution of assistance caused by lack of access to areas of return for non-governmental organizations, and confusion among returnees regarding what they are entitled to and who is responsible for delivering it.

BUTENIS